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Short Communication

Note on the record of *Blythia hmuifang* Vogel, Lalremsanga, Vanlalhrima, 2017 from Lunglei District, Mizoram, India

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Abstract

One specimen of *Blythia hmuifang* Vogel *et al.* (2017) has been traced from among the collections of Zoological Survey of India collected from Lunglei district of Mizoram, India which forms the largest specimen known and slightly differ from the original description. The taxonomic details of the specimen presented in this paper show such differences amounting to extended range of scale counts.

Keywords: *Blythia*, Colubrid Snakes, Lunglei District, Ventral Scales, Variationr

Introduction

Blythia Theobald, 1868 is a semifossorial snake of family colubridae found in north-eastern India and Myanmar (Wall, 1924; Smith, 1943; Wallach *et al.*, 2014; Vogel *et al.*, 2017). Previously this genus was considered to be monotypic with the only known species *Blythia reticulata* (Blyth, 1854) inhabiting mid elevation montane forests in its distribution range (Smith, 1943; Das, 2002; Whitaker & Captain, 2004; Das & Das, 2017). Recently Vogel *et al.* (2017) described another species, *Blythia hmuifang*, from Mizoram, based on four specimens collected from Aizawl (holotype) and Serchhip (paratypes), deposited at Departmental Museum of Zoology, Mizoram University, Aizawl, India. Presently the species, *B. hmuifang*, is known by specimens from the type description only. While working on specimens from the National Zoological Collections at Reptilia Section of Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, another specimen from Lunglei district was traced out and this constitutes the third locality record for this recently described species.

Material and Methods

Identification of the specimen was carried out by following the diagnosis provided by Vogel *et al.* (2017). The meristic counts were taken under a Leica EZ4 dissecting binocular microscope and morphometric data were recorded with a digital slide calliper to the nearest 0.1 mm. Body and tail length were measured with a non-elastic twine and tape to the nearest 1.0 mm. The measurements, counts and abbreviations are as per Raha *et al.* (2018).

Results and Discussion

The present report is based on a female specimen (Figure 1) housed in the National Zoological collection of ZSI, Kolkata, (ZSI 25219) from Sairep, Lunglei District, Mizoram (approximate coordinates 22.82° N, 92.82° E, datum - WGS 84; Figure 2) collected by S.S. Saha on 18th January in 1995. This locality is about 100 km from the type locality (Aizawl) and about 50 km south the locality of the paratype. The scalation and mensural data of the adult female specimen are presented in table 1. This constitutes the third locality record of this species and the first record from the Lunglei district of Mizoram. Though this specimen confirms with that of Vogel *et al.* (2017), but differs in ventral and subcaudal scale counts. Vogel *et al.* (2017) reported the range of VEN to be 114-117 and that of SC to be 18-21 while the specimen we studied has a VEN count of 123 and 16 SCs. It can, however, be distinguished from *Blythia reticulata* and assigned to *B. hmuifang* unambiguously on the basis of higher number of VEN, SC and a dark coloured venter in the former species (vs. lower number of VEN, SC and an orange or yellow venter in *B. hmuifang*).

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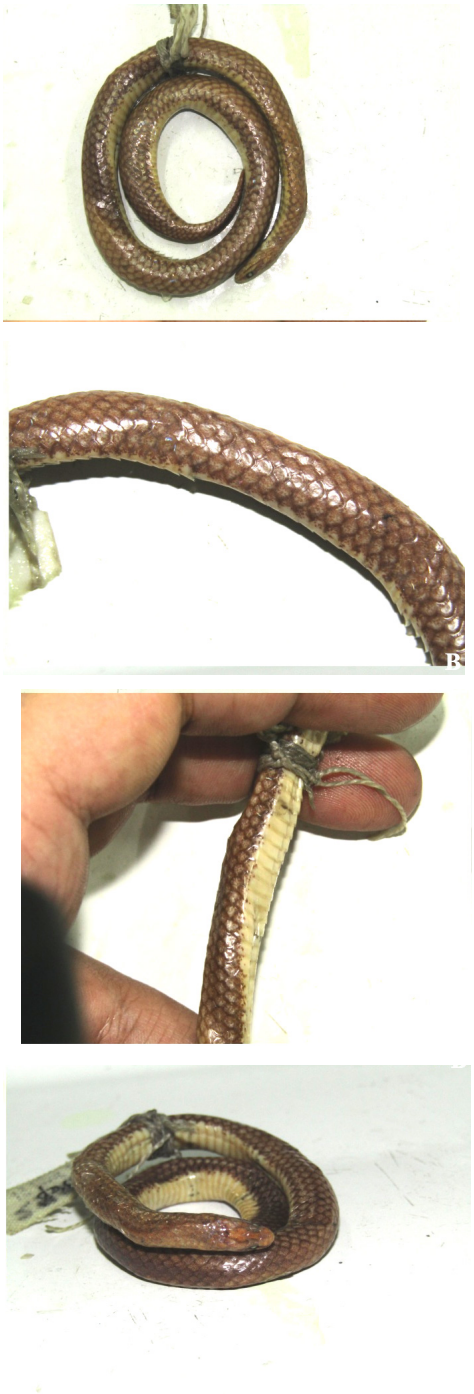

Figure 1. *Blythia hmuifang* Vogel *et al.*, 2017 (ZSI 25219), viewed from different angles.

The data presented herein increases the knowledge on the possible range of VEN and SC in this species. A good amount of information on possible intrapopulational variations can be of much help when making important alpha taxonomic decision (Das *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, members of the genus *Blythia* has never been included in any phylogenetic studies and it's affinities within colubridae remains elusive (Pyron *et al.*, 2013). Therefore locating additional samples in holdings of various museums and collection of fresh specimens for phylogenetic analysis can help in better understanding of phenotypic variations, habitat information, and natural history and thus, will contribute towards the conservation of this species.

Table 1. Scalation and morphometric data of ZSI 25219; R/L – Right/Left, W x H – Width x Height

Characters	*Blythia hmuifang* Vogel *et al.* (2017)	
	ZSI 25219 (n= 1)	Vogel *et al.* (2017) (n= 4)
SVL	202 mm	154-176 mm
TL	26 mm	21-23 mm
HL	8.42 mm	4.84 (holotype)
HW	5.14 mm	-
HH	4.32	-
ED	1.6	-
ESn	2.5	-
Rostral (W x H)	0.8 x 0.8	-
Frontal length	2.9	-
Frontal to rostral	1.5	-
Parietal length	4.7	-
Temporal (R/L)	1+2/1+2	1+2/ 1+2
SL (R/L)	6/6	6/6
IL (R/L)	6/6	6/6
SL touching eye	3 and 4	3and4
DSCH:M:V	13:13:13	13: 13: 13
DSC type	Smooth	smooth
VEN	123	114-117
SC	16	18-21
SC type	Paired	Paired
Anal	2	2
Loreal	0	0
Prefrontal	2	2
Preocular	0	0
Postocular	1	1
Sex	Female	Both sexes

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